



Operator Certification

Fact Sheet

This program trains, tracks experience, tests, and certifies water and wastewater operators of public drinking water systems and community wastewater systems. Operators keep the public safe both from contamination/tampering. The program could be expanded with a high school curriculum that allows students to work and receive a Class I certification upon graduation (Education). This program also relates to Economic Development, HP&EP, Public Safety, and Natural Resources.

EPA requires states to have an approved operator certification program. Having a qualified operator at each water or wastewater system is imperative in order for the system to operate in a manner that does not endanger the public. The rules are complex and the systems are complicated and require a great deal of recordkeeping and monitoring. The goal is to have sufficient qualified and knowledgeable operators for every water and wastewater system.

Performance Indicators

- % operators completing continuing education
- %systems with certified operators

Narrative

This program trains, tracks experience, tests, and certifies water and wastewater operators of public drinking water systems and community wastewater systems. The program is advised by a Committee of Certification. The program maintains a database of 8,000 operators at any/all of 20 classes of certification. DHH Operator Certification staff write, administer and grade all of the tests (multiple tests for each class), oversee and perform training for operators, certify and train instructors, approve all training classes. The program staff assign experience points to each operator upon application and track continuing education requirements with a custom-designed and secure database. All Engineering Services personnel assist with conducting training classes and administering examinations. Nearly 400f training classes and more than

forty examinations are held throughout the state each year. All operators must recertify every two years and are required to take continuing education classes.

Better Health

- Every person bathes in, drinks , cooks, or washes with water. This water must be safe. Every person generates wastewater at home, school and at work. The population served is >5.4 Million people/year. There would be little economic development or tourism in Louisiana without well-managed utilities. Louisiana has one of the oldest and best run Operator Certification programs in the United States. Proper operation of water and wastewater utilities is imperative for public safety and for public confidence that its health is being protected by the State.
- The Operator Certification Program is mandated by EPA and overseen by a State Committee of Certification. The official (mandated by state law) training arm of the Operator Certification Program is the Louisiana Conference on Water Supply and Sewerage. The Program collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Federal EPA and CDC, the Louisiana Rural Water Association, operator training organizations, the Louisiana Municipal Association, the Police Jury Association, DEQ , the Public Service Commission (privately-owned water systems). National collaborations include the Association of Boards of Certification, the National Association of Drinking Water Companies, the Environmental Council of States and the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators, the Water Environment Federation and the American Water Works Association..
- Operator Certification staff work hands-on with operators, owners, municipal and parish officials, trainers and stakeholders to ensure that water and wastewater systems are operated safely and in compliance with the regulations.

Without proper operation of water and wastewater systems, people would become ill and/or die from inadequately treated drinking water and sewage pollution would damage the state's natural resources and endanger public health. Economic Development is stymied in areas without well operated water and sewerage and public confidence relies on their trust that their community water and wastewater is safe.

- Federal Authority: 42 U.S.C. 300f, *et seq.* (Safe Drinking Water Act); Regulations 40 CFR Parts 141-143
State Authority: Louisiana Revised Statute 40:1141-1151. State Regulation: Title 48, Part V, Chapter 73
- Operator Certification information is posted on the DHH OPH website:
 - Center for Environmental Health: <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=242>
 - DHH-OPH Engineering services: <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=204>

- Safe Drinking Water: <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?id=238>
- Community Sewerage: <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?id=237>
- Operator Certification Corner: <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=236>